

## A Summary of “Awakening to Dream: Yeats’s Imagination and ‘Mask or the Covering Cherub’”

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### 要 旨

「創世記」によれば、神との約束を破り、「原罪（善・悪）」を知るにいたった人間（アダム）が神に対し最初に行った行為、それは自己存在の＜隠蔽＞である。つまり「創世記」によれば、先祖アダムに始まり「人間（モータル）」とはそもそも己の実存的根幹に関わるもっとも重要な核心をこそ隠蔽するように宿命づけられていることになる。この箇所を言語のレベルに着目してさらに吟味してみると、原罪を知った人間の最初の言語は、＜神＝聖なる他者＞との「応答（レスポンス）、すなわち自己の真意を他者に伝える道具として用いられたのではなく、むしろ、自己の負い目をカモフラージュするために用いたと解すことができよう。かりにそうだとすれば、人間言語の固有性の証とされる「複雑性（コンプレックス）」、その根本原理は「思考性（コギト）」である前に、真相を隠すことによって複雑化—フロイト流にいえば、人間心理の「コンプレックス」の根本原因は隠蔽である—すること、すなわち「隠蔽作用」に求められまいか。

この教えは、「複雑」な言語作用による一つの「虚構（意味）コード」の「編み込み（テクスチャル）」としての文学「テキスト」を読む際、有効な示唆を与えるものがあるように思われる。少なくとも、イエイツ詩を読む場合には極めて有効であるといえる。というのも、イエイツ詩学の中核に位置づけられる「仮面」の詩法とは、言語のもつこの「隠蔽作用」を前提にしているからである。すなわち、「仮面」の詩法とは、巧みにカモフラージュされた特殊な語り的手法を通し、いわば（レコード）ドーナツ盤の構造体をつくりあげ、その空洞化された中心軸に＜事のコル心＝真意＞を潜ませ、それを空洞に響く沈黙＝「仮面（「ペルソナ」の原義は「～を通して＝per響く＝sonare）」の声として＜隠しつつ開示する＞方法である、とみることができからである。本論はこのイエイツの特殊な詩法を一つの命題として措定し、その解明を「仮面＝ケルブ」を鍵として、解明を試みた論、その概略である。

### 1

While few readers would dispute the claim that William Butler Yeats is the greatest modern poet among those who write poetry in English, the basis of that claim is surprisingly difficult to define. The manifold aspects of his works would constitute the formidable obstacle to its identification. Arthur Symons, who dedicated his book, *Symbolist Movement in Literature*, to Yeats, regards him as the great comrade of the “Symbolist Movement” in English literature. T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and harbingers of Modernism, look on him as a master in a new literary world, though some critics like F. R. Leavis places him under “the Great Tradition” of English literature. Occultists mainly focusing on *A Vision* frequently suggest that his quest for “Unity of Being” should grow a strong root in the soil of Neo-Platonism where he as an alchemist

succeeds in mixing up well every exotic element.

Yeats's Irish background further complicates his identification: while some Irish readers respect his great behavior as a leader of Irish Renaissance, other radical readers may listen to his political voice of a revolutionary hero leading Ireland into independence, though his ambivalent political attitude may sometimes irritate them. Or Anglo-Irish readers may feel sympathy with the dilemma of his mixed background. We Japanese, however, may consider a different aspect of Yeats: some Japanese scholars, who have studied the influences of the Japanese elements such as Noh-Drama and Zen Buddhism on him, greatly appreciate him for acting as a bridge between East and West.

Even the several above-mentioned aspects picked up at random would be a sufficient proof that once we try to estimate Yeats's works in consideration of his various aspects, we come to find ourselves in a troublesome place as though we stood in a kaleidoscope where each view, set by chance or at choice, would have equal validity without consideration of a common background.

Such a babelized condition around Yeats studies, however, would be even favorably received by many experts on Yeats because this situation implicitly allows them to approach his works freely by picking just one topic or one viewpoint out of many according to each concern or taste, where the most welcomed study might be to specify each approach, each being carefully conscious of not invading other habitats on the general agreement that Yeats studies consist in the habitat segregation. It does not always mean that such an approach does harm to their development. But rather as critics who share in the great benefit from many preceding meticulous studies, we should appreciate them for showing us the manifoldness and richness of his works.

But here is a simple question that inevitably arises once we read his works as a naïve reader. It is likely to be in a sense a blind spot in the viewpoints of the specialists — what is the true identity of Yeats whose voice is sounding through his whole work. Don't we need to identify his essential nature deeply hidden in "phenomenon" of his works that gives unification of all the microscopically resolved aspects into an organic body? It may safely be assumed that the most significant key to this situation can be found in the unique relation between Yeats's imagination and his dreams of its revealing because he is a poet and imagination must be a poet's conscience for him. (Although he might have often been mistaken for something else, all the things were important for him because these were taken up as latent forms of poetry.)

In this thesis I have clarified the essence of his dreams visualized in his whole work under consideration of how his imagination has worked on there. For Yeats the poet dream in itself means the true mirror reflecting the reality of inner world, contrary to the false mirror of realism just reflecting the surface of outer world: "Beloved, gaze in thine own heart, / The tree is growing there; ..... / Gaze no more in the bitter glass..... / For all things turn to barrenness / In the dim glass the demon hold, / The glass of outer weariness, / Made when God slept in times of old." ("The Two Trees")

Yeats regards his own poetry as the externalization of his dreams in which the invisible reality has made itself visible. Thus he clearly defines his vocation as the illuminating of dreams: 'In dreams begins responsibility.'*(Responsibilities)* It should be realized even if we have read his works throughout only once without any prejudice.

## 2

There is a commonly accepted view on W. B. Yeats's poetic development: Yeats in the early work escaped from the real world he had lived in to the world of dreams. An older Yeats reversed those priorities, and came back to the real world. Lloyd R. Morris was perhaps the first critic to argue for this radical disjunction between the spirit of Yeats's early works and that of his later ones by defining the early as the Celtic Twilight, the later as the Celtic Dawn. He describes Yeats's career in *The Celtic Dawn* (1917) as follows: "Yeats's unique contribution to poetic feelings lies in the dream-like, haunting, other-world spirit that his poetry evoke" (a spirit based in) "Yeats's disbelief in the life of actuality, and his conviction that the life of dream is the life of reality". But "in his later work he has dwelled less often in the land of the imagination, and more frequently deals with reality". Since his book was written in 1917 when Yeats's career as a poet had just half finished, it is very surprising how long his view remained as the average of Yeats criticism in currency, though the details of the formulation were to vary from critic to critic.

One of the main reasons why his extreme view has been commonly accepted lies perhaps in our general inclination to preferring the simplification: the dichotomy of his theory was too much plain for the reader to resist the temptation to the "simplism" or "simplex syndrome". Richard Ellmann and Norman Jeffares, the two distinguished authorities on Yeats, have helped to popularize the oversimplification: they regard the young Yeats as an irresponsible dreamer, in contrast to the active and socially committed man by putting a special emphasis on the turning point of Yeats's spirit in *Responsibilities* (1914). But we cannot ignore that the young Yeats in his twenties, is just as active and public-minded as he in the middle age. In fact the mixture of a feverish dreamer and a socially active man is characteristic of Yeats throughout his life.

In the long run, the oversimplified disjunction is likely to have been caused by the generally misunderstood notion of dream or imagination itself, which is that the dream or imagination is just the escape from the reality of our actual life. It seems to be the typical discourse reflecting the scientific and rational mind of the modern age. But here we need to stop for a while on the modern way and re-learn how to dream in order to awake from the hibernation named "realism" to the reality of dream.

In this sense a few excellent perspectives on Yeats's imagination as is seen in *The Dramatic Imagination of W. B. Yeats* by Andrew Parkinson must be noted: Yeats should be regarded as the greatest commentator on imagination or dream since Coleridge in English literature. Frank Kermode defends such a perspective in his *Romantic Image* as follows: "So certain was he that art was not escape that he thought of the situation the other way round: art was what you tried to escape from. Yeats did not walk out of his dream, but simply extended it to include everything, and went on being a poet till he died."

## 3

On his imagination there is a viewpoint which has almost become a blind spot for critics, especially for those who regard Yeats as an occultist: for Yeats, life in itself is the most supernatural and mysterious phenomenon, and therefore it should be the one which has been expressed as the greatest wonder of wonders and the miracle of miracles among others, although we live our lives without being aware of its fact. The reason of our unawareness would be that there is the veil or the binding of habit that keeps us from its realization, though the miracle itself always happens to our daily lives as every child knows it well.

Thus the great passage of Christ can be justified: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." ("Matthew" 18: 3) Or we can find the other proof in the lines of "Ode" by Wordsworth: "Child is the father of man.....best philosopher.....Mighty prophet ! Seer blest !"

Therefore one of the greatest themes assigned to all the Romantic poets, Yeats's precursors throughout life, had become the recovery of innocence lost by eating the Fruit of Good and Evil, the fruit of experience: all their nostalgic journeys without exception were for returning to the Innocent Garden before the Fall because they wished to be free from habituation of life by finding the critical viewpoint on life in innocence. But unfortunately they could not but conclude at last that their pilgrim's progress toward innocence had failed because of being blocked by the obstacle named experience. This would be why their imaginations had lost their vigor as they grew older.

But it is interesting that Yeats's imagination became even more active as he aged: the closer he approached death, the greater the energy of his imagination grew. The reason is to be found in his discovery of the paradoxical viewpoint that enables him to bring the Copernican revolution into his understanding of life. The name of this new viewpoint is "death."

Indeed just as the hardest thing to realize for fish would be water, the hardest one to do for us humans is our life itself. To know the truth, fish needs to once leap over water to the ground in order to realize that water really exists. And in the same way we need to stand at the point of death to realize the existence of life: death is to us what ground is to fish. As an evidence that Yeats thinks so, we can quote a passage from "Certain Noble Plays of Japan": "it is even possible that being is only possessed completely by the dead, and that it is some knowledge of this that makes us gaze with so much emotion upon the face of the Sphinx or of Buddha." Yeats explains such a paradoxical relation between life and death by using the excellent metaphor of "death-in-life, life-in-death" — the most essential metaphor on life in his later work.

Needless to say, the way of viewing the essence of life paradoxically out of the viewpoint of death presents a very similarity to that of what we call "existentialism". ("existence" is the composite word of "ex", which means "out" and "sistere", "stand".) Bearing this consideration in mind, we can find out the deep insight into the spirit of the age in Yeats's imagination as though it predicted clearly what new bud of the spirit of the age was about to come out.

The Freudian psychoanalytical approach to dreams lacks the ability to consider the phenomena of dreaming as the existential projection. In this sense, the phenomenological approach to dreams by Ludwig Binswanger and Michel Foucault in *Le Reve et L'Existence* (*Traum und Existenz*) is noteworthy, since its perspective, while criticizing sharply the weak points of Freudian or Jungian approach, has shown its original aspect on dreams: dreaming is not an extension of sleeping, which is an act of preservation, but the visional moment of our existence, and hence the most significant dreams are to be found only in the death dreams because there our existence reveals itself as the purest forms free from the binding of the habitual life with its painful groaning for our life condition hopelessly having fallen.

When this approach is applied to Yeats studies, the essential lack seen in the approach to dreams by Frank Kermode in *Romantic Image*, where its essence is consistently considered as "Unity of Being", "the beatific vision", would be well supplied, and therefore the constant complaint against his perspective from Paul de Man in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* as follows is to be answered as best as possible: "The fact

remains that one enters here into a world of cold terror and strident dissonance, far removed from the essentially attractive and reassuring image of the 'great-rooted blossomer' and the 'body swayed to music'. No interpretation will do Yeats justice that fails to account for the controlled violence of the late work."

#### 4

By re-reading his whole work once focusing on the death dreams, we shall realize that there is a certain image like a shadow accompanying them, although no critic has not yet revealed the image for the reason that Yeats himself has cleverly concealed its existence. To begin from the conclusion, the identity of this image is thought to be the "Covering Cherub". The proof is to be found in the passage from *The Work of William Blake, Poetic, Symbolic and Critical*, edited by Yeats and E. J. Ellis. (There is only one mention of the Cherub throughout his whole work) It runs thus :

These palpable forms would have been classed by Blake as a portion of the 'Covering Cherub' or mask of created form in which the uncreated spirit makes itself visible. The term is taken from Ezekiel XXV iii 14 ..... He (Blake) praises or denounces this Covering Cherub according to whether he considers it as a means whereby things, too far above us to be seen as they are, can be made visible in symbol and representative form, or as a satanic hindrance keeping our eager wills away from the freedom and truth of the Divine world. It has both aspects for every man.

Cherub in the original meaning is the singular noun of Cherubim, an angel who is the "guardian" of Eden with "the flaming sword that turn every way" blocking us never to enter the paradise and eat the fruit of the Tree of Life which enables us to become immortal. In the literary context, the Cherub is understood as follows : before the Fall the Covering Cherub worked well as the pastoral figure, the unifying process, enabling the undivided consciousness — the innocent state without subjects and objects. But after the Fall he started to work as the blocking figure to guard the Innocent Garden from Fallen people never to enter. Thus the imagination of the Romantic poets, as is mentioned properly in Yeats by Harold Bloom, is recognized to work as the power to uncover the Covering Cherub through fighting against the flaming sword.

But it should be noticed that Yeats does not reduce it to the negative aspect but finds in it the positive one by misreading Blake's imagination. For Blake it has nothing but the negative aspect he calls "negation" — the negative memory of mortal body covering the eternal memory of soul or state of "Innocence", while for Yeats the Cherub means the positive aspect of "mask of created form". The uniqueness of Yeats's viewpoint and the difference from that of his precursor is closely connected with his recognition of death — death does not signify just the negation of life but implies the positive aspect in which it becomes paradoxical mirror reflecting life.

But the fundamental question still remains : why does Yeats need to have concealed such a significant image throughout life. To solve this question, the only way to answer this question and to clarify the unique and mysterious structure consistently seen in his whole work is to re-read it from the beginning to the end.

## 5

According to “Genesis”, the first behavior of human beings who become mortal by eating the fruit of knowledge of good and evil was to create a cover-up of their own existence : since the age of Adam, it has been the fate that we have concealed the very “heart of the matter”. Reading this chapter by noticing how the language was used there, we shall consider the matter as the followings : the first function of language was not to respond to God the Sacred Other, that is, language was not used for communicating our real intention to the others, but rather camouflaging it. If it is the case, the primal principle of language, whose complexity is often regarded as the characteristics of human beings, lies not in thinking, “*cogito ergo sum*”, but in concealment of our existence — the “complex” in the Freudian word is primarily originated by concealment or suppression in our sub-consciousness. (Bearing this consideration in mind, concealment is not supposed to be the result of intrinsic thinking in our language but the very cause and origin of thinking.)

This sacred lesson might give the unique standard for reading to some literary works where each “text” consists of the complex “texture” or the code of fiction. I would suggest that this standard should be applied to reading Yeats’s works, because the doctrine of “Mask” on his poetics depends upon the very function of concealment. The Mask is the poetic rhetoric by which the skillful narrative builds and shapes itself to form a doughnut (like an EP record) where the heart of the matter inherent in its hollow axis is paradoxically disclosed or visualized consistently through hiding — the real voice or “the first voice” (in T. S. Eliot’s phrase) of poet has been faintly heard through the reader’s imaginary ears just as the echo of the voice rung alone in a deep cavern, as typically expressed in “Man and the Echo”, and it has been echoing in the sound of silence under the disguised “persona” or mask. (Persona is the composite word of “per” which means “through” and “sonare”, “echo”.) This strange characteristic seen in the structure of his works has been assumed as a thesis here — the thesis put up here is that truth is inherent in concealment. (We know well that an implication is often more important than the direct statement.)

Readers will generally tend to search for the author’s real intention and the core of the text in some statements clearly shown in his or her work in which they are emphasized and often repeated. This tendency may have become the unspoken agreement on Yeats studies. But such a conventional reading should be revised, if this assumption is considered as valid for reading Yeats’s works, because it inevitably demands his readers to use the proof by a *reductio-ad-absurdum* : the greatest value for tracing closely his works throughout is not to know what he has mentioned but to know what he has not mentioned in them. To put it more concretely, the point to be seriously considered for his readers is not the parts generally regarded as the center of the text, but the ones being ignored as peripheral — the marginal blanks between the lines, eliminated parts on the process of making the draft, the unnaturally inserted lines and gradually shifted meanings of phrases and words away from the original at the time when they are often repeated. This is the typically paradoxical method, but it is supposed to be a syntactic way accessible to the heart of Yeats’s manifold personas, because the heart of his whole work is thought to be inherent in the hollow of a doughnut.

The conclusive proof that this supposition is valid is to be found only in the fact that what is hidden in the core of the doughnut is nothing but the “Covering Cherub”. We should notice here again that the first appearance of the Cherub is in the context of describing the self-concealment of Adam and Eve, because it explains well why its original meaning in Hebrew is “cover” : being blocked by the Cherub and

consequently doomed to be mortal, we call it the "cover" of the immortal soul — the symbol of death and the poisonous thorn of the body equal to the symbol of the original sin or the weight on our conscience. It implies that we are created to cover up our own existence because it paradoxically uncovers (that is, declares) that our lives have been cursed for the original sin the moment we believe in this mysterious angel, as in *Macbeth* where "Cherubim" are used as another metaphor of the dagger paradoxically covered up with Duncan's golden blood: "a naked new born babe, / Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, hors'd / Upon the sightless couriers of the air....."

In this dissertation I have proposed to look at the function of the Cherub in the context of Yeats's works under the assumption that it is the core of his whole work, but is covered up skillfully by Yeats himself. The outline of my perspective shall be shown further on.

## 6

Yeats says in his early prose as follows: "They break forth amid events too private or too sacred for public speech, or seem themselves, I know not why, to belong to hidden things....." Yeats in his early period calls this "private, sacred and hidden" symbol "the Secret Rose". That is, the real name of "the Secret Rose" is considered to be hidden in the complex code as though it were *the Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco — Rose has so many individual names that it cannot be identified as its concrete name. This would be the reason why the Symbolist poets and Blake liked its name: the name of the rose in itself becomes an abstract noun and the effective code or the mask of beauty.

The trouble is that in his later work even the name of "the Secret Rose" has completely disappeared and therefore it is harder to decipher its code. Of course it does not mean that his dream itself has disappeared out of his works but in the opposite sense the symbolism of his works becomes deeper by its name being sealed. But in current Yeats criticism this consideration has been almost ignored, as a result of which the oversimplified and commonly accepted view mentioned above has not been unchallenged.

Of course, there are some studies which have challenged to decipher its code. *Yeats* by Harold Bloom, *Romantic Image* by Frank Kermode and *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* by Paul de Man should be taken as the eminent examples of some exceptions. And *Trilogy of A Tree half aflame and half green*, a great study on Yeats's imagination with the style of novel by Kenzaburo Ohe should be added to those. This dissertation, deriving valuable suggestions from them, will present an original perspective because it is not supposed that even these superb studies have guessed exactly what the real name of the Rose is.

Then what is the identity of the secret name in his later work? The key is to be found in the three 'it's, the personal pronouns which are presented as a common riddle played by Yeats in his three master poems — the triadic 'it' seen in "The Statues", "Byzantium" and "Vacillation". Each 'it' gives up its own grammatical duty because what 'it' indicates is intentionally obscured. We can find here the typical device of concealment or protection by the poet himself: each 'it' secretly implies in common a certain symbol with the paradoxical device of uncovering with covering.

First, we should take notice of 'it' as it appears in "Byzantium":

Before me floats an image, man or shade,  
Shade more than man, more image than a shade;

For Hades'bobbing bound in mummy — cloth  
 May unwind the winding path ;  
 A mouth that has no moisture and no breath  
 Breathless mouths may summon :  
 I hail the superhuman ;  
 I call it death-in-life and life-in-death.

In this context what “it” directly indicates is perhaps “an image, man or shade” — “an image” which is explained vaguely as a certain condition of being throughout this stanza. But in the long run the readers just come to realize that what “it” indicates as “an image” is not made clear by parring the question : in the end we cannot but conclude that what “it” indicates cannot be found within this poem. In this case, we can find out the valuable suggestion in the passage of *The Resurrection*, a Yeats's play : “Man has begun to die. Your words are clear at last, Oh Heraclitus. God and man die each other's life, live each other's death.” Or we can extract the relevant passage from *On the Boiler* : “this something else must be the other side of the penny — for Heraclitus was in the right. Opposites are everywhere face to face, dying each other's life, living each other's death.” Taking these passages into consideration, we can understand that what “it” or “an image” indicates is to be clarified through keeping with Heraclitus's voice in *Fragments*.

But as the same time we need to take care of the fact that he is just “man or shade” in disguise in order to conceal the true man who influenced definitely on Yeats — Nietzsche in *Also sprach Zarathustra* made Heraclitus the model for *Zarathustra* “Superhuman” (if the literary supposition of Harold Bloom is valid, the concealment or the murder of precursor caused by the anxiety of influence should not be applied to Shelley or Blake but Nietzsche because Yeats has often confessed in public that both poets have the great influence on him, while he has concealed Nietzsche's influence on him throughout his life.) Anyway, admitting that “the superhuman” in “Byzantium” implies Nietzsche, we will make sure that an enigma inherent in “it” in this poem is closely concerned with the doctrine of “Mask”.

The Mask Yeats has declared to be the core of his poetics is often explained as follows : it is the dramatization of his poetry by creating the anti-self contrary to the self where each opposite dialogues with each other with some collision. But it should be noticed that this declaration does not means the disclosure of the secrets of his Mask, because he refuses to explain concretely how the Mask has been molded and how it has worked in his whole work. No approach to the Mask in Yeats criticism in currency can dispel the impression that it remains within the bounds of the abstract explanations of just tracing what Yeats already mentioned. In short, no one can specifically explicate how it functions well as a poetic rhetoric.

## 7

The origin of “Mask” goes back to his “discovery” of Blake's mask at the age of twenty four, in the case of which it was considered “as a mean whereby things, too far above us to be seen as they are, can be made visible in symbol and representative form”. At the start it meant the Platonic mirror of reflecting the celestial idea, and then it turned out to be the lamp which projects the eternal soul covered up by the mortal body.

But this mask is completely transformed in his later work : the later Yeats challenged Blake by putting



on the new mask of Nietzsche. Its distinguishing characteristics, in a word, can be explained as the mirrors set facing each other in the position of which each mirror reflects each other's image. For Yeats this new mask is to be recognized as the paradoxical mirrors reflecting the reality of life, one mirror being considered as death mirror reflecting life by being set facing the other mirror (or being pregnant with life by the opposite mirror), while the other as life mirror reflecting death — the mirrors in which "opposites are everywhere face to face, dying each other's life (mirroring each other's life) and living each other's death (mirroring each other's death)." It explains well the unique metaphor of "death-in-life, life-in-death". In other word, at first "the mirror turns lamp" and then the new Mask. Thus we come to understand clearly that what "it" in "Byzantium" points out is nothing other than the Mask itself.

Viewed through the concept of the mirrors, his real intention is hidden in the mysterious opening line containing the puzzling "it" in "The Statues" — "Pythagoras planned it." — is to be understood : in fact "Pythagoras" mentioned here can be identified as Yeats himself putting on the mask of Nietzsche and "it" as the Mask. So his real intention in this line is to be interpreted as a declaration of his Mask : "I planned the Mask". For Yeats Pythagoras was the first discoverer of the correspondence of number and music in proportion, because he discovered that the length of a musical note was in proportion to the number : "World-famous golden-thighed Pythagoras / Fingered upon a fiddle-stick or strings / What a star sang and careless Muses heard : ....." ("Among School Children") In this case the Pythagorean music (scale) or the Pythagorean theorem means for Yeats as well as for Nietzsche the Dionysian function contrary to the plastic one of Apollo.

This esthetic principle on his Mask is easier to grasp if we can pay attention to the exquisite contraposition seen in the placement of "The Statues" and "News for the Delphic Oracle" because the placement of these poems is carefully "planned" to act on as the Mask owing much to *The Birth of Tragedy* by Nietzsche. The former is skillfully placed to work on well as the plastic function of the Apollonian, while the other is done as the musical one of Dionysus. Thus these two poems have been unified to work on well as a Mask where a mirror turns mirrors of death-in-life and life-in-death set facing each other.

## 8

At this point, it is significant to remember that all the mirrors set facing each other have a dual function : simple reflection of the opposing image is one function ; at the same time, however, there is a "changeling" function by which each image is reflected one after another by infinitely exchanging subject and object (or at the same time reflecting and reflected) because each mirror has infinite mirrors inside, one nesting inside the other like a Russian folk doll. By imagining that it is visualized as a movement, we find here the figure of a spiral with an asymptotic expansion from this imagined point. It is the very function of "Mask" that Yeats calls "the Double Spiral" — "the Double Vision" visualized as the figure of historical movement in *A Vision* : while one spiral image becomes the front side of the light, the other becomes the back side of the shadow, each image "lives each other's death and dies each other's life."

It is interesting that when we once again read "Byzantium", "Sailing to Byzantium", "Prayer for my Daughter" and "Among School Children", taking this function into consideration, we come to confirm that the exquisite poetic devices seen in these poems are made possible by the excellent poetic technique of Mask : in its basic structure, these two former poems have the mythically sacred images in which the poet

aims at expressing the transcendence, perpetual artifice and death, all of which are resolved symbolically into “the miraculous golden bird planted on the star-lit golden bough” of a tree, while the latter ones have the popularly secular images where he views the earthly common life in a positive light by putting up as the parody of the former poems “the linnets” perching on “the green laurel” and “the common birds” reminding us of the image of “the ugly duckling” abiding “under the spreading chestnut tree”.

But simultaneously in its secondary structure, each text has another mirror inside which reflects the opposite image of the primary. It has the characteristic structure of the Mask as the mirror where each primal image is paradoxically parodied by the secondary image, with each image of mirror on mirror exchanging each subject and each object.

## 9

We should remember here once again the passage quoted before: “These palpable forms would have been classed by Blake as a portion of the ‘Covering Cherub’ or mask of created form in which the uncreated spirit makes itself visible”. It means by the implication that he treats the Mask and the Cherub as equals by finding the proof in the term in Ezekiel XXV iii 14. Keeping this in mind, we can come close to the true identity of what the third “it” seen in “Vacillation” is — a mystery in which “it” still stands in reader’s way as if it were a riddle played by Sphinx. The most pertinent answer to this riddle is to be found in the “Cherub”.

Between extremities  
 Man runs his course :  
 A brand or flaming breath,  
 Comes to destroy  
 All those antinomies  
 Of day and night :  
 The body calls it death,  
 The heart remorse.  
 But if these be right  
 What is joy?”

Although on the grammatical level, what “it” points out in this stanza is thought to be “a brand or flaming breath”, the true identity of this image is intentionally made obscure here. But if we suppose that “it” is equal to the two other “it” s appearing in the two other poems already mentioned, it occurs to us that “Cherub” is expressed as “a brand” in “Ezekiel” that Yeats refers to in his *Blake’s Work*. That is, the answer of a riddle inherent in “it” is the Cherub that Ezekiel the prophet visualizes as a Jewish sphinx. While Sphinx is the guardian who stands on our way by playing the most difficult riddle of our existence, Cherub is also the guardian with the flaming sword who stands between Eden and this world in order to guard Paradise. (It is noteworthy that the movement of “turning every way of flaming sword” is expressed as “vacillating” in the original meaning of Hebrew.) Superimposing these considerations on this stanza, we come to find the real intention of the poet here : whenever we may recollect the Cherub, we feel remorse so

much keenly for our condition of fallen life that "the body calls it death, the heart remorse", while asking ourselves "if these be right / what is joy?" (The original meaning of "Eden" in Hebrew is "joy".)

But at the same time, we should keep in mind that what "it" indicates is to be regarded as the Mask, because "a tree half all glittering flame and half all green" in the second stanza, where the Cherubic image is more concretely shown, implies the very function of the Mask as well. The image is easier to visualize when it is understood as "a tree" modeled on the one taken from the following passages in *The Mabinogion* :

On one bank there was a flock of white sheep, and on the other a flock of black sheep. When a white sheep bleated a black sheep would cross the river and turn white, and when a black sheep bleated a white sheep would cross the river and turn black. On the bank of the river he saw a tall tree : from roots to crown one half was aflame and the other green with leaves.

In writing the second stanza, Yeats considers not only the metaphor of a mysterious tree, but also the whole here, because for Yeats these sentences must be accepted as those to resolve into the great metaphor of his Mask : the metaphor of a flock of white and black sheep exchanging each other's color through crossing the river suggests the function of the Mask as the mirrors in which life and death or white and black exchange each other by paradoxically mirroring each opposite image. ("the river" here would correspond to the mirror.) And of course it is true of a tree half flame (symbolizing death) and half green (symbolizing life) : "And half is half and yet is still the scene ; / And half and half consume what they renew." (These lines would remain obscure if the function of Mask is disregarded.) Thus we will be able to solve a riddle inherent in "it" seen in the three poems by considering it as co-equal with the Cherub and the Mask.

Bearing these considerations in mind, we could explain well the reason why Yeats persistently concealed the true identity of Cherub throughout his life : the riddle hidden in the Cherub in itself is equal to the riddle posed by Sphinx and the one that mortal beings need to respond to perpetually ; for Yeats the poet, the answer to the riddle of the Cherub is "original responsibility" for his own existence : "In dreams begins responsibility."